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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON MIDDLE EAST

Editorial Commentary

-- "The challenges that Arabs face"

Chief Editor Ayman Safadi writes on the back-page of independent, centrist Arabic daily Al-Ghad (08/15): "Hardly any speech by an Arab leader is void of talk about the challenges that face his country and the region. There is the challenge of the Iranian influence in the Arab area; there is the challenge of the Israeli expansion and aggressiveness, and there is the danger that is represented by extremism and terrorism. There is also non-stop talk about economic, social, cultural and political challenges. Let us forget for one moment that only few are talking about the danger of the fact that most Arab regimes are cocooned in archaic dictatorial systems and almost alone bear the responsibility of the failure for which the Arabs have paid in backwardness, degradation and marginalization.... Let us agree that these challenges that the general Arab regime has not stopped talking about are priorities. Let us then ask about the plans that the Arab decision-makers are setting to deal with these challenges. The answer is catastrophic. The Arab regime has turned into a lamenting entity mourning a present and doing nothing to change it.... The Arab political action is at best a reaction to events imposed on the region. Dealing with the Israeli war on Lebanon was a bright example of that."

-- "Hizbollah's victory"

Columnist Yaser Abu Hilala writes on the op-ed page of independent, centrist Arabic daily Al-Ghad (08/15) says: "The victory that was achieved by Hizbollah in Lebanon is going to have earthshaking repercussions on the regional level and not just in Lebanon. The upcoming generation of young Arabs have witnessed a model that is attractive as opposed to other models that are not. They view the party's victory without sectarian or political barriers: young men of few numbers and few weapons stood fast in the face of the most fierce force ever known in the region.... What Hizbollah did is an extension to what the resistance did in Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan. The Arab and Muslims persons see one battle, exactly as Bush sees it, and they see themselves in the trench opposite a president who does not hesitate to use the description of 'Muslim fascists' to describe the accused in the plane plot. The Arab and Muslim youth do not see in Hizbollah's battle a Farsi Shiite battle, although many opponents of the party tried to describe it like that. It is the battle of the nations of Arabs and Islam against the nation of Israel and America.... The lost dignity is not an occupation by a foreign enemy, it is also a repression from an

inside enemy. The arena of the next battle in the nation of Arabs and Islam is internal, without even having complete the war with the foreign enemy." HALE